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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1601

August 6, 2012

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES AND
RISK MANAGEMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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LIVESTOCK, DAIRY, AND POULTRY
BUDGET COMMITTEE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I am writing to respectfully inquire as to what exactly you would like included in the next Farm Bill. In a *Politico* article dated July 31, 2012 you were quoted as saying that a one-year extension of the 2008 Farm Bill is simply "an excuse" to not put in the work to pass a long-term bill. Such a statement can only be taken as an expression of opposition on the part of the Administration to a shorter extension of the existing bill.

However, details from the Administration as to what would be acceptable, either in the context of an extension or of a full-term Farm Bill, are sorely lacking. The statements from your office that do exist are incredibly vague and unhelpful. You have offered broad platitudes and general ideas—"maintain a strong safety net," "improve conservation," and reduce errors and fraud within SNAP—but provide no clarity as to how these goals should be attained. While we had 23 words from USDA explaining the agency's position on "Meatless Monday," there have been zero words about USDA's *specific* priorities for the next Farm Bill.

Administrators of agencies under USDA jurisdiction have been equally vague. During hearings before the House Agriculture Committee over the last eighteen months, I have repeatedly asked what programs are most important to them, and how they can be improved. Each time, the witnesses deferred to the Committee, refusing to identify any potential improvements to the programs they oversee.

It is clear that you have issues and concerns with the extension. If you would like to see something better, we would be happy to consider your recommendations. I respectfully request that you submit to my office details of programs, including estimated costs, by August 13.

Sincerely,



Tim Huelskamp

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